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REVIEW OF PEACE AND SECURITY
ISSUES IN 1988 AND THE
CANADIAN RESPONSE

Geoffrey Pearson
Executive Director, CIIPS

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FOREWORD

The legislation which created the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security in 1958 states the main purpose of the Institute is to promote knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to international peace and security from a Canadian perspective, with particular reference to arms control, disarmament, conflict resolution, and other issues of peace and security issues, and the Institute's purpose is to, in addition to contribute to the knowledge of these issues, and thereby help to promote peace and understanding.

This is the second volume in the series of publications of the Institute. The publications are distributed at the price of \$2.00 per copy.

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ISBN 0-662-16733-3

PREFACE

The legislation which created the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security in 1984 states that "the purpose of the Institute is to increase knowledge and understanding of the issues relating to international peace and security from a Canadian perspective, with particular emphasis on arms control, disarmament, defence and conflict resolution." An annual review of peace and security issues, and the Canadian response to them, is intended to contribute to and encourage public discussion, and thereby help to increase knowledge and understanding.

This is the second annual review: like its predecessor, it was written by Geoffrey Pearson, Executive Director of the Institute. The judgements and conclusions of the paper are those of the author.

Introduction

The 1988 federal election in Canada was dominated by the issue of free trade with the United States, an issue, it was often said, that gave to the election historic importance. It did so because Canada's relations with the US are a key determinant of our character and independence as a nation, and both supporters and opponents of the Free Trade Agreement cast the argument in these terms.

There was no comparable discussion of our defence relations or policies, despite similar concerns about sovereignty and independence. Perhaps this was because all three Parties emphasized "do it yourself" defence policies, differing mainly on the means and costs. Such policies are popular--seventy-five percent of Canadians believe that the protection of Canadian territory and sovereignty is the best reason for any possible increase in Canadian defence forces, according to a CIIPS poll in the summer of 1988. The debate about free trade turns on the proposition that it will (or will not) strengthen Canada's independent capacity to compete in a world of trading blocs. But both opponents and supporters of the Free Trade Agreement appear to agree that "continentalism" in matters of defence threatens Canada's sovereignty. The following review of international security in 1988 and Canada's response explores this and other issues.

East/West Relations

The Cold War has been the motivating force for Canadian security policies (and those of other Allies) since 1949, when the North Atlantic Treaty was signed. A key question in 1988 was whether the Cold War was ending, warmed by the sun of new policies in Moscow and the welcome these received in the West. But as the year ended there had been only slow

progress in the negotiations on reducing strategic nuclear arms and on abolishing chemical weapons, and the so called "conventional stability talks" between NATO and the Warsaw Pact had yet to begin. Thus the hopes aroused by the INF agreement in December 1987 were somewhat premature. Nevertheless the political climate continued to improve, aided by the partial withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Mr. Gorbachev's announcement of unilateral reductions in Soviet armed forces, agreement on a timetable for the independence of Namibia and the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, and signs that other regional conflicts might be ending. Meetings at the Summit, as well as at lower levels, continued and seem destined to occur annually. Other Western leaders were eager to imitate the vogue for summit meetings. Finally, the new openness of Soviet society, including the virtual ending of barriers to foreign broadcasts, emigration and visits abroad, contributed to a growing belief amongst Western observers that significant change was underway in the long frozen atmosphere of Soviet life.

It is often said that the unity and strength of the West is the reason that Soviet positions on arms control and other issues of the Cold War are beginning to change, and it is inferred that the Allies should continue to be strong and united if such change is to become permanent. It seems clear, however, that the Soviet Union is now attempting to follow its own agenda, perhaps impelled by the need for domestic reform, and that this imperative, rather than deterrence in the old sense, is the motor of change in East/West relations. In any case, it will be tempting for the NATO Allies simply to congratulate themselves on the policies of the past rather than to explore new opportunities for radical change in East/West relations. This may be especially true of plans to produce new weapons, both

nuclear and conventional, which require long lead times to be put into service. It would not be the first time that technology had effectively undermined the progress of arms control negotiations, and Soviet domestic constraints are unlikely to be decisive for long if the Soviet leadership perceives that the West is ready to take advantage of, rather than to reciprocate, the results of "new thinking" in Moscow.

The Canadian response to these developments has been mixed. While the Prime Minister told the United Nations General Assembly in September that "progress towards a more peaceful world has been dramatic and deeply encouraging" and spoke of a "new age," other Canadian spokesmen have preferred to emphasize the need for step-by-step negotiating approaches to continue, whether on reductions in strategic and conventional weapons or towards a Comprehensive Test Ban, and have set out demanding criteria for the success of such negotiations. The watchword has been "realism."

Three factors are especially relevant to the formulation of Canadian policies on East/West relations: Canadian public opinion, relations with our Allies, and relations with the Soviet Union. Changes in public opinion will be considered below, but it may be noted here that polls reveal great uncertainty about how best Canada should respond to recent improvements in East/West relations. The Government can be confident that Canadians support the NATO Alliance, but are not at all sure what kind of burden we should bear in so doing.

As for relations with our Allies, there is no Canadian disposition to part company with them on major questions of doctrine or strategy except in cases where American policies themselves appear to break a consensus, as for example in

the attempt to develop a shield against ballistic missiles. This is understandable. Nevertheless there is room for a Canadian view. Canada's strategic situation is quite different from that of other Allies, a fact that the Defence White Paper of 1987 goes some way to acknowledging, but there is little on the public record relating to negotiations on strategic weapons that reflects such a view. What, for example, is our reaction to the superpower stalemate on how to count and verify cruise missiles, the deployment of mobile missiles, or perceived violations of the ABM Treaty? These are subjects of intense debate in the US because they affect the nature of strategic stability and therefore the threat of nuclear attack on North America.

No doubt the details of such questions are better discussed in the privacy of the NATO Council, but the decisions taken and the consequences of these are obviously of interest to a broader public. Thus our relations with the USSR are improving, but to what extent are they dependent on policies over which we have little apparent control? The Arctic is a case in point. Mr. Clark has said that Arctic security is a NATO issue rather than a Northern issue and that "we will stand fast with our Allies" (speech at Carleton University, 18 October 1988). That is all the more reason, if one accepts this thesis, to be told what NATO intends to do in response to recent proposals by the USSR on Arctic security. In the same speech Mr. Clark said that "the threat to Western security is global" and he implied it would require a global solution. What kind of solution? Does Canada have an agenda for the future of East/West relations?

One of the purposes of NATO was precisely to obviate the need for separate agendas on this subject, a point forcefully made again by NATO Ministers in December in

relation to future negotiations on conventional arms control ("we shall reject calls for partial security arrangements or proposals aimed at separate agreements"). It may be that this approach makes sense in Europe, where Soviet forces pose a more or less equal threat to the European Allies, and where, in the words of the December communique, "a secure peace cannot be achieved without steady progress on all aspects of the confrontation which has divided Europe for more than four decades." But the fact remains that Mr. Gorbachev has begun a process of global diplomacy, extending far beyond Europe, which echoes in many ways traditional Canadian views of collective security based on the precepts of the UN Charter.

We have recognized, as the Prime Minister told the United Nations General Assembly in September, that "true security" is threatened as much by global poverty and a degraded environment as by weapons. Canada's election to the Security Council will provide opportunities to reinforce our support for international law and organization as other major components of international security. Such priorities are a welcome contrast to rhetoric about Soviet conduct as the source of all evil, and the overriding need for armed strength to deal with it. The NATO Alliance is in need of new purposes and fresh concepts that link the interests of the Allies to those emerging threats to their security which imply cooperation rather than competition with the USSR--third world debt, regional conflict, nuclear proliferation, and so on. Canadians in particular would find such goals attractive.

Regional Conflict

There was an evident link between the improvement of East/West relations in 1988 on matters of arms control, human rights, and exchanges, and the successful settlement or continuing negotiation of regional disputes. Again, this trend can be partly attributed to changes in Soviet policies, although other factors were also important--exhaustion in the case of Iran and Iraq, Western pressure on South Africa, the Arias initiative in Central America. With the ending of war between Iran and Iraq, Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan, and a virtual cut-off of United States military aid to the Contras in and around Nicaragua, the scope of armed conflict in the third world was greatly reduced. The political settlement of these and other disputes however is far from achieved, except, surprisingly, in Southern Africa, where persistent and patient diplomacy by the United States, aided by the USSR, has led to agreement on arrangements for the independence of Namibia. The UN Secretary General, supported by a new readiness of the Permanent Members to cooperate, will now become a key factor in the process of picking up the pieces.

Some of these, however, still remain outside the competence of international mediation, either because the Parties cannot agree on the basis of a settlement, or because the conflict is of a largely domestic nature. In 1988 the status of the Palestinians became the best known example, although far more deaths took place in Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, the Sudan, Colombia, El Salvador, the Philippines and in the Indian state of Punjab. Moreover, arms exports to the third world were still climbing in 1987 (\$25 billion according to SIPRI), and the number of countries able to produce sophisticated weapons was increasing.

While the scope of global conflict has declined since 1987, and the role of multilateral diplomacy correspondingly increased, future trends are by no means clear. The status and rights of minorities in many countries, including the USSR, is emerging as a major global issue. Governments now buy arms as much to preserve their own powers as to guard their borders. Minorities often straddle borders, however, (the Kurds are a good example), offering the temptation or the motive for neighbours to intervene. Growing poverty in parts of Latin America and Africa add to incentives for these minorities to take up arms. Such poverty is unlikely soon to be relieved if third world countries continue to have to pay off debts which in 1987 resulted in net losses to them of \$43 billion.

In these circumstances, Canadians may expect their interests to be affected in various ways: more refugee applications, more demands for peacekeeping and for humanitarian assistance, and in general greater concern for foreign policy issues that affect particular groups of Canadians with ties to the peoples whose futures are at stake. The areas of conflict that appeared to concern them most in 1988 were Central America, Southern Africa, and the Middle East.

Central America

In 1987 there were hopes that the Arias peace plan would resolve the difficulties encountered by the earlier efforts of the interested countries to find diplomatic solutions through the Contadora process. These hopes vanished in 1988 despite face-to-face meetings in June between the two sides in Nicaragua. A summit of Central American leaders planned for November was postponed to 1989.

Fighting continued in El Salvador and sporadically in Nicaragua. In October Honduras called for the United Nations to provide a peacekeeping force to patrol its borders, suggesting that Canada might take part, and this was followed up in December by a letter from the five Foreign Ministers to the United Nations Secretary-General. It was not clear how such a force might operate without, at the least, an agreed cease-fire between the Parties involved.

Canadian non-governmental organizations, conscious of a continuing flow of refugees (some 27,000 from Central America since 1983) and engaged in substantial aid programmes in the region, pressed the government to intervene more forcefully in the peace process by offering assistance for peacekeeping and the safeguarding of human rights, increasing development aid, and opening diplomatic missions in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras. A special parliamentary committee reported in favour of such recommendations in July.

The Government agreed to increase development aid by \$100 million over five years and to open the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) offices (but not embassies) in the countries mentioned. It repeated previous assurances that requests to participate in "the design of appropriate peacekeeping mechanisms" (J. Clark, 26 September) would be met positively, and that, if asked, it would also assist with advice about human rights. These issues were barely mentioned in the election campaign, however, and, with the demise of Reaganism in the US, it may be that public concern will diminish. It will certainly revive if conditions in the region deteriorate again and if the prospect of military intervention by the United States increases. Alternatively, a political settlement could lead

to the presence of Canadian military observers in the area, arousing new anxieties about Canadian roles and capacities. But such involvement would follow naturally from the strong Canadian interest in preventing conflict between the US and her near neighbours.

Southern Africa

The year ended with an agreement on the independence of Namibia by 1990 and a timetable for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola, crowning American efforts (with Soviet encouragement) to link the two in a package deal. An internal settlement in Angola remains to be found, but cannot now be far off. South Africa, in addition, made diplomatic overtures to selected African states and appeared to be relaxing pressure on Mozambique as well as Angola. In contrast, there was no apparent improvement in the status of black South Africans. New measures were taken to repress opposition and to muzzle the press. Sporadic violence continued.

A year ago there was little prospect of positive change between South Africa and her neighbours, despite American pressure. A key factor in reaching agreement may have been Soviet influence on Angola and Cuba, leading in turn to South Africa's reassessment of the danger to her security of an independent Namibia. The effect of sanctions in this reassessment is difficult to evaluate. The Commonwealth committee of Foreign Ministers reported in August at their meeting in Toronto that trade sanctions "are having a discernible impact on South Africa," but did not explain how. A report to the Ministers suggested that lack of new foreign investment was having a greater impact, but again it is hard to measure this in terms of political change, of which there has been little. The fact that one of the main

conclusions of the meeting was the need to persuade non-Commonwealth countries (especially Japan and West Germany) to imitate Commonwealth sanctions is perhaps evidence that, lacking global agreement, economic sanctions are unlikely to have a significant effect on South African policies. Even then, means of enforcing such measures would need to be put in place (the mandatory arms embargo imposed by the Security Council in 1977 has been violated with apparent ease).

The Canadian Government is sensitive to these hard realities. Mr. Clark told the House of Commons in March that "since Canada's trade is less than one percent of South Africa's total trade, our action is more effective when it is in concert with, or as catalyst to, actions by nations whose economic impact is greater." With the exception of the United States, South Africa's major trading partners have not so acted. Nevertheless, Canada announced several new measures in September to tighten sanctions, as well as new help for anti-apartheid organizations in South Africa. The latter, Mr. Clark has said, are a major reason for keeping diplomatic relations with South Africa; without such relations it would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to disburse the some \$8 million a year that Canada gives to these organizations. "So long as we feel we are being effective, we will be there" (Clark, 16 August).

Both opposition Parties and forty-one percent of the public (according to an August poll) support stronger sanctions. Few, if any, important domestic interests are involved in the issue, given the paucity of Canadian aid and trade links with South Africa. The Government, therefore, is relatively free to move ahead with sanctions if it believes that further action is required. It is also committed to do so if the situation in South Africa does not

improve. However, Canadian membership on the Security Council of the United Nations beginning in 1989 will not make decisions easier. The Council will be deeply involved in implementing the agreement to bring Namibia to independence, a task that will require South African cooperation and in which Canada has been asked to participate.

The Middle East

Violence in the Israeli occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank provoked widespread international concern during 1988. This was a new development. Israel's relations with her northern neighbours, particularly Lebanon, had previously been the major focus of international attention. While these relations remained tense, the outbreak of Palestinian resentments served to remind the international community that the core of the conflict in the Middle East revolves around the relations between Israelis and Palestinians.

The uprising in the territories began on 9 December 1987 and over the course of the next year led to over 300 deaths. Israel was criticized at the United Nations and elsewhere for using harsh measures, including deportation, to deal with the unrest, and there was division and uncertainty amongst Jewish communities abroad. Diplomatic efforts, led by the US, to find a basis for agreement between Israel and her neighbours, failed, and the results of the Israeli elections in November made the outlook no better. On the other hand, a decision by Jordan in July to sever its links with the West Bank and to hand over responsibility to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) galvanized the Palestine National Council into declaring on 15 November an independent state of Palestine, since recognized by some seventy or more countries. In December

the PLO accepted conditions for opening direct talks with the US, including the acknowledgement of the right of Israel to exist and the renunciation of terrorism. The first round of these talks were said by both sides to have been useful. Also in December, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a Resolution by 138 votes to two to convene an international peace conference with the participation of the PLO, other parties to the dispute, and the permanent members of the Security Council. Inasmuch as the two opponents were the US and Israel, the Resolution is likely to remain without effect.

These various developments led to muted response in Canada. Mr. Clark welcomed the opening of direct talks between the US and the PLO but there was no indication that Canada might move in the same direction. Canada abstained on UN resolutions relating to a peace conference, finding herself in one case bracketed alone with Costa Rica. This reticence was puzzling. While there was no apparent reason why Canada should try to take a lead in these matters, it was equally unclear why we needed or should want to be out of step with the vast majority of UN members in endorsing a peace conference. Canada has good relations with Israel and our influence there, while obviously not decisive, could have impact. Israel has been sensitive to criticism from the West, including a courageous speech by Mr. Clark in March, about the treatment of Palestinians by Israeli authorities. One must hope, therefore, that Israel's friends, including Canada, will urge that country to reciprocate the steps which the PLO has now begun to take.

Elsewhere in the region, the ending of the Iran/Iraq war and what appeared to be a new realism in the foreign policies of Iran helped to brake the build-up of arms in the Gulf and in Saudi Arabia, to diminish the presence of

external actors, and to weaken the forces of extremism. In Lebanon, however, the impasse continued and the prospect of anarchy remained. Canadian observers are not stationed in Lebanon, but are now part of the new UN presence on the Iran/Iraq border, continuing an honourable tradition.

Arms Control and Defence

The quickening pace of change in Soviet policies on arms control and disarmament was climaxed at the end of the year by decisions to reduce Soviet forces by some ten percent of total armed forces, and to withdraw six tank divisions from Europe. These decisions augur well for the forthcoming talks on conventional forces in Europe. Ratification of the INF Treaty in the spring was followed by further evidence of Soviet willingness to comply with strict verification provisions. Indeed, the issue of verification is now a technical rather than a political issue, and Canadian efforts in this area have helped to bring solutions closer. As noted earlier, however, much remains to be done. The goal of a Comprehensive Test Ban (CTB) is still a distant prospect, and at the UN there was no consensus on ways of dealing with nuclear arms control. The militarization of space continues. Given this impasse, major non-aligned countries are not prepared to accept restrictions on conventional arms production or transfers. UNSSOD III failed to agree on a final document in June.

Western defence policies, including those of Canada, will have to be reconsidered in the light of Soviet "new thinking." The Defence White Paper of 1987 set ambitious goals requiring a long-term commitment to real annual growth in the defence budget of at least two percent. While these goals were not the subject of extensive debate during the election campaign, it is not at all certain that the costs

can be sustained, given the competing domestic priorities which the campaign did emphasize. Moreover, the claims on Canadian wealth engendered by poverty and disorder in much of the world are bound to increase. In these circumstances, and in the absence of the East/West tensions of the early Reagan years, officials anxious to reduce the budget deficit are bound to look closely at the real needs of defence. They will be helped by those who question the White Paper's assessment of the threat to Canadian security, an assessment drawn up before the implications of Mr. Gorbachev's new policies could be properly appreciated.

The defence dilemma centres on the cost/benefit ratio of maintaining credible forces in Europe while at the same time preparing to assume increased responsibilities for the defence of Canada. By NATO standards, Canada can afford to do both. Costs of about three percent of GNP or more are normal in the Alliance, and Canada is well below this level. But NATO standards may change as the Allies grasp at the attractive opportunities offered by Mr. Gorbachev for reducing conventional arms,--the US for example is experiencing a decline in the rate of real growth of defence spending. For Canada, the needs of maritime defence, whether oriented towards sovereignty or security, have assumed priority, and cannot easily be sacrificed. As these needs increase, the early re-equipment of Canadian forces in Europe is bound to be questioned. The costs are high and the purposes less convincing as Soviet policies change and European defence cooperation develops.

Re-equipment of the navy is a longer term objective, with lower short-term costs for the submarine programme. But this programme too raises questions of NATO priorities and burden-sharing. Are ten to twelve Canadian submarines an appropriate contribution to the Alliance? Would

negotiated restrictions on submarine movements be a better alternative, if these were feasible? In any case, what is the NATO view?

If Canadians can be persuaded that the costs of defence relate to real rather than hypothetical threats to their security, such costs would be borne. This was true during the first two decades of the Cold War when the deterrence of nuclear war was believed to require a high degree of readiness to wage war if necessary. It began to fade during the third decade, and then revived in the first half of the eighties. Opinion is now more fluid (see below) and, with the waning of Cold War tensions, more attention is being paid by all Parties to the objective of "sovereignty protection" as a defence task. The safeguarding of the Canadian North from threats to its natural and human environment is a cause most Canadians support. An expanded Canadian military presence in the North, including submarines, might contribute to such ends, but the nature and size of the military effort and the costs involved are unlikely to be agreed soon. As this report concluded last year: "Canada needs a more comprehensive approach to its North which includes circumpolar cooperation, and offers a Canadian vision of a peaceful Arctic."

Public Opinion

The 1988 CIIPS public opinion poll confirmed trends found in 1987. On questions of East/West relations, Canadians see less of a military threat from the Soviet Union: they are as skeptical of the policies of the US as those of the USSR. The major threat they perceive is the arms race, and the danger of a regional conflict escalating to nuclear war. Somewhat surprisingly, the INF agreement and the prospect for a fifty percent reduction in nuclear

weapons through the START negotiations, do not relieve fears of nuclear war: inadvertent or accidental nuclear war, along with proliferation of nuclear weapons is still a major concern for Canadians.

The vast majority of Canadians support continued membership in NATO: however, fewer than a third believe in one of the central tenets of NATO doctrine, that the Alliance should use nuclear weapons first if it begins to lose a conventional war in Europe.

Most Canadians reject much change in the Canadian defence effort: they want to continue about the same level of expenditure, being careful not to be seen as not pulling their weight in NATO. However, Canadians now regard the protection of Canadian territory and sovereignty as the best reason for increasing defence spending. Support for increased spending for defence was divided sixty to forty with the majority opposed; when asked if taxes should be increased for the purpose, eighty-five percent said no.

The proposed purchase of ten to twelve nuclear-powered submarines was the defence issue which received the most public attention in 1988. Opinion was mixed. When Canadians were asked if they supported the proposal, with no price-tags attached, fifty-five percent said yes. However, when the question mentioned the estimated cost of the purchase, support declined to forty percent or less.

Conclusions

East/West relations continued to improve in 1988, aided in large part by Soviet actions as well as words. There can now be little doubt that, whatever the reasons, Soviet "new thinking" about foreign policy is genuine. Whether it will

continue depends in part, at least, on a Western willingness to respond positively in areas of mutual interest--arms control in particular.

Other factors also contributed to this improvement. The costs of war helped to persuade Iran, South Africa, Nicaragua, Vietnam, and the USSR to seek the settlement of conflict. The burden of debt and poverty in many countries emphasized the need for global management of North/South relations, and threats to the natural environment encouraged the trend towards international cooperation. Equally, however, these pressures challenged the capacities of many states to provide their citizens with basic human rights. If peace depends on justice as well as order, it was far from clear in 1988 that peace was closer to hand.

As noted above, the Canadian response to Gorbachev's "new thinking" was positive but cautious. At the United Nations Canada supported traditional NATO policies on disarmament, despite defections by other NATO members. However, in Canada there was popular support for defence policies that put less reliance on allies, particularly the US. The potential costs and trade-offs of such policies, implying increased defence expenditures if current NATO commitments are to be kept, had not been resolved at year's end. Indeed, if detente becomes the norm rather than the exception in East/West relations they will become progressively more difficult to resolve. Redefining Canada's place in the Alliance to a receptive public without exaggerating the virtues of national sovereignty will be an important task in 1989.

Indeed, it has long been true that the Canadian identity has found its most satisfying expression through emphasis on the need for international cooperation to deal

with threats to world order and security. Thus in 1988 Canada again led the Commonwealth in pressing for international action against apartheid and responded quickly to UN requests for peacekeeping help in South-west Asia. Our easy election to the Security Council for a two-year term was a tribute to these kinds of constructive internationalism (no longer disparaged as "helpful fixing"), but it also implied that other states expected Canada not only to share "primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security," in the words of the UN Charter, but to take a prominent part in so doing. This responsibility will be severely tested in the Middle East, Southern Africa and perhaps in Central America, but it offers as well a rare opportunity both to contribute to the authority of the United Nations and to increase respect for Canadian diplomacy.

Canadians have understood since 1945 that their security cannot be preserved in isolation, and they have come to identify the meaning of "security" with an allied military capacity to deter or to respond to attack. The notion of military deterrence will not suddenly be abandoned, but Canada is in a good position to press the view that future security is more likely to be found in co-operative measures to deal with global problems.

